

Funeral Sermon for Joyce Bertelsen

I remember as a child walking across town with my friends to engage in a fairly competitive game of “Mini-Putt!” In Kirkland Lake back in those days, this was pretty much the “highlight” of our week! It was what one might consider the “Nintendo” of our day!

I think one of my most vivid memories of those times was walking home in the hot summer sun – which contrary to popular belief we did receive for at least two months of the year! By the time we finished the mile and a half walk we were absolutely parched! It was all we could do to lift that glass of cold water to our mouths and drink it down - allowing it to bring to us the renewal and refreshment we so desperately needed!

I can't help but think of Joyce as being that place of refreshment for those she knew and ministered to. In our second reading this morning, we discover that the Apostle Paul is aware that his time on earth is drawing to a close when he says, “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure” (2 Tim. 4:6). I can't think of a better verse to describe the life and ministry of Joyce Bertelsen. She was indeed a drink offering for her family, friends, colleagues, and those of us here at St. Margaret's – and we gladly received God's blessing as it was expressed so beautifully through her life!

Paul goes on to say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (v. 7). Once again Joyce and Paul have a lot in common. Like Paul, Joyce was so very faithful in many ways, but most especially in her desire to minister – something she continued to do even from her hospital bed. To say that Joyce “fought the good fight” might be something of an understatement!

British pastor and author - F. B. Meyer once said, “Don't waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come. But faithfully handle the little things that are always claiming your attention.” The “little” things that claimed Joyce's attention were many, and she did them with a tenacious love and enthusiasm despite her health issues. Whether the need was a simple phone call, a meal delivered, a prayer prayed or a card sent, these things and more found their way into the homes and hearts of those she loved. Joyce's faithfulness to her God and to her family, friends, and community have caused her to finish the race with great dignity and honour.

Perhaps most important is that through the joy of life and pain of adversity Joyce, like Paul, managed to “keep the faith” (v. 7)!

One thing that impressed me about Joyce was her ability to receive ministry as well as give it to others. As a minister I am aware of how those in the Pastoral field often give to others at the expense of their own spiritual well-being. But Joyce was quite happy for me to come and visit her in hospital and pray with her and anoint her with oil, or bring communion. She seemed very aware that in order to “keep the faith” she too needed to receive from God's hand of Grace and Mercy. And having done so, we can envision her now resting safe in the arms of Christ – free from all pain and fear – enjoying his presence in a way that we can only imagine!

As Joyce has found her place of rest in Christ, I pray we too will find him to be that place of rest, comfort, and strength in the days ahead. And as Joyce received from his loving hand those things she needed to sustain her in life, may we too receive from his hand all that we need to carry on her legacy of love and faithfulness to those God has entrusted to us! Amen.

Homily by the Rev. Capt. Stephen Pessah